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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Saturday, June 11, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM WASHINGTON." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Plant Industry, and the Extension Office, United States Department of Agriculture.

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"Maybe I'm prejudiced," writes our correspondent -- "Maybe I'm prejudiced and then again maybe I'm not. But in this mechanical age I still think that a few things are made better in home kitchens than anywhere else. One of these is fruit jelly, currant or crabapple or grape jelly, say. Making fine, translucent, tender, quaking jelly with fresh natural fruit flavor and bright natural fruit color -- that's a homecraft, to my mind, or better, a home art. Such jelly can't be made in large quantities. You only get the quality by making a few glasses at a time. What's more, such jelly is too delicate to stand much shipping. Jelly for market in general must be firmer. But in the home kitchen you can produce that quivering jelly of fine flavor and texture because it usually will travel only from the kitchen to the pantry shelf and then the family table.

"Well, as I said, I may be prejudiced in favor of jelly made by home methods. And if I am it is due to Mrs. Fanny Walker Yeatman of the Bureau of Home Economics who has let me see and taste the jellies she has been making year after year. Of course, Mrs. Yeatman has been making her jelly in the laboratory but her methods are home methods and her directions are those that any housewife can follow.

"So imagine how please I was the other day to learn that Mrs. Yeatman's jelly-making secrets are now in print. The Department of Agriculture has published a new bulletin called 'Homemade Jellies, Jams, and Preserves'. It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1800, if you can remember numbers better than names. And while the supply lasts, any housewife in the country is welcome to a copy.

"Isn't it good luck that this new bulletin is out just as preserving season is getting in full swing? On page 5 of the new bulletin you'll find exact directions for making jelly from apples, crabapples, blackberries, cranberries, currants, gooseberries, grapes (wild and tame), plums, quinces and red raspberries. Take your pick. Then over on page 10 comes the information on preserves. (Just reading it wakes up my appetite.) There you'll find directions for cherry preserves, citron melon preserves, peach, pear, ginger-pear, damson plum, quince, strawberry, watermelon, and tomato preserves. And then come the marmalades and the jams--but I'll stop right now. I mustn't write this whole letter about one new bulletin with so much other news to report.

"Here's a little information from the Forest Service about preventing decay in frame houses. The Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wisconsin, has been making an investigation of wood decay in houses and the scientists there report that a house that is dry and properly built is in practically no danger

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of decay. Here are some precautions to observe when you build your house. Build on a site that is well-drained. Buy well-seasoned lumber from a yard that does not tolerate rot in foundations and lumber piles. Do not use lumber that is starting to decay. Do not allow the lumber to lie on the ground after delivery and do not let untreated lumber come in contact with the soil or with foundations or walls that are likely to be damp. Finally, never allow unseasoned wood to be embedded in concrete or masonry without leaving ventilation around the ends of timbers. As for your floors, unless wood flooring has been chemically treated, never lay it directly on the soil or on concrete in contact with the soil. Provide plenty of ventilation so that free circulation of air around the wood will keep it dry.

"Do you know how to pick out a good cantaloup when you go to market-- or when you go out into your own cantaloup patch? Mr. W. R. Beattie of the Bureau of Plant Industry offers some good tips on that subject. He says a cantaloup to have the right flavor and sweetness must not be picked too green nor too ripe. He says there are telltale marks as to when a cantaloup is picked. A cantaloup picked too green will have a part of the stem attached and the color of the background beneath the netting will be pure green. A cantaloup picked too ripe or from a diseased vine will have a pale yellow or faded appearance. But one that has a slight golden color showing through the netting and has a firm blossom end--the end opposite the stem--which does not show paleness is reasonably sure to be good. If the melon is picked full ripe, no part of the stem will remain and there will be a clean scar. The presence of little globules of reddish brown sugar around the stem scar is a pretty good indication that the melon is sweet.

"By the way, since precooling of fruit has been adopted by growers and shippers of fruit, melons ripened on the vine rather than those picked and shipped green are being sent across the continent. And since the new cantaloup variety called No. 45 has been adopted by growers, melons grown on diseased vines are not found so much. Cantaloup No. 45, you know, is the mildew resistant variety.

"About the time you receive this letter, tents to shelter some of our most important annual visitors will be going up near the Department of Agriculture building. A hundred and 60 boys and girls representing the 1 million 192 thousand rural young people enrolled in 4-H Clubs all over the country will be here on the 16th for their annual encampment. But I'll be writing you more of that later."

This concludes our Saturday letter from our Washington correspondent.

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